

## Introduced by Senator Escutia

February 17, 2005

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An act relating to health care coverage.

## LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 437, as introduced, Escutia. California for Healthy Kids Program.

Existing law creates various public programs to provide health care coverage to eligible children meeting certain household income requirements, including the Healthy Families Program administered by the Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board.

This bill would state the Legislature's intent to create the California for Healthy Kids Program to provide children living in California from birth to 21 years of age access to affordable health insurance coverage.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares as follows:
- 2 (a) Investment in comprehensive health insurance for children
- 3 is cost-effective, promoting access to early, less costly preventive
- 4 care and treatment. Health insurance helps children reach their
- 5 potential in school. Children with insurance experienced a 25
- 6 percent improvement in health, and a 68 percent improvement in
- 7 paying attention in class and keeping up with school activities.
- 8 Health insurance is also an important predictor of access to care.
- 9 (b) Although approximately nine out of every 10 California
- 10 children have health insurance, according to 2003 data from the

1 UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, nearly 800,000  
2 children in this state are currently uninsured.

3 (c) The goal of insuring all children in California is  
4 achievable, and can be reached through modest steps.  
5 Employer-based insurance that now covers 50 percent of  
6 California's children, and public programs that now cover 30  
7 percent, serve as strong building blocks on which to insure all  
8 children. In addition, local children's health initiatives across the  
9 state are showing the way. Local coalitions in 10 counties have  
10 implemented public and private initiatives to ensure affordable  
11 coverage for all children in their communities, and 17 other  
12 counties are in the planning stages.

13 SEC. 2. It is the intent of the Legislature to create the  
14 California for Healthy Kids Program, with the following goals:

15 (a) Create a strong private and public initiative in which all  
16 children living in California from birth to 21 years of age will  
17 have access to affordable health insurance coverage.

18 (b) Build upon what works in California's publicly funded  
19 state insurance programs and reform what does not, including  
20 modernizing and simplifying how children get enrolled and stay  
21 enrolled in coverage.

22 (c) Create a statewide insurance system that leverages the  
23 lessons and successes of local children's health initiatives.

24 (d) Promote voluntary opportunities to strengthen employer  
25 participation in covering dependents.

26 (e) Develop sustainable financing that supports the system  
27 over the long term, including maximizing federal funding.

28 (f) Promote opportunities for children to access services under  
29 their health insurance coverage.

30 (g) Ensure a strong safety net as a vital component of access to  
31 care.

32 (h) Do no harm as these reforms are put in place.